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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000517

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL TW CH

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE SPEAKER WANG JIN-PYNG ON WHA,
CROSS-STRAIT AGREEMENTS, AND LOCAL POLITICS

REF: A. TAIPEI 510
1B. TAIPEI 500

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons 1.4(B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: Although recent progress in cross-Strait relations is generally positive, the pace of detente and the content of agreements like those recently signed in Nanjing need to take better account of Taiwan's sovereignty, security considerations, and the interests of the Taiwan people, Legislative Yuan (LY) Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (KMT) told the Director on April 29. While Wang welcomed the WHO's invitation to participate in this year's World Health Assembly (WHA) (ref A), he predicted the opposition would raise concerns over the WHO's use of "Chinese Taipei" vice "Taiwan" or "Republic of China." Asked if he had raised these concerns with the President, Wang complained that Ma has not solicited his views, so he has remained silent. Wang anticipated the LY would soon approve Taiwan's accession to the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). He was optimistic on the ruling Kuomintang's (KMT) chances in the December local elections, but warned that should President Ma Ying-jeou concurrently serve as KMT chairman, it would not be the panacea for party unity some expect. End Summary.

WHA Invitation

12. (C) LY Speaker Wang Jin-pyng gave the Director in an April 29 meeting a copy of the World Health Organization (WHO) letter inviting "the Department of Health, Chinese Taipei" to participate in this year's World Health Assembly meeting in Geneva. He pointed out that while the fact that the invitation came directly from the WHO to Health Minister Yeh Chin-chuan was a positive development, the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) would certainly criticize the use of "Chinese Taipei" as compromising Taiwan's dignity and sovereignty. Wang added that the DPP would also argue that the agreement does not address the larger question of Taiwan's involvement in the WHO itself. We will need to wait and see whether the Taiwan delegation would, in fact, be able to meaningfully participate in this year's events, Wang cautioned, or whether the delegation would simply be considered part of the larger China delegation.

Cross-Strait Agreements Need Careful Evaluation

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¶3. (C) Wang said the recent cross-Straits agreements signed in Nanjing were neither completely positive nor completely negative (ref B). While no one would argue that warming cross-Straits ties are not beneficial, the speed of detente and the content of the various cross-Straits agreements are debatable. Wang went on to say that some DPP concerns may have merit, such as the need for corresponding measures to limit mainland investment and the need to obtain fifth freedom rights for Taiwan airlines. On the financial cooperation agreement, Wang argued that mainland resources far outweigh those of Taiwan and without some restrictions on PRC investment, Taiwan could become vulnerable. It is hard at this point to evaluate whether the finance and law enforcement cooperation agreements would be beneficial, argued Wang. It would require time to see how the agreements are executed. The scheduled flights agreement, however, would make travel across the Strait more convenient, Wang acknowledged.

¶4. (C) Wang said the LY would consider Taiwan's sovereignty, security, and the benefits to the people in ratifying any cross-Straits agreements. However, he expected no problems with ratification due to the KMT's overwhelming legislative majority. But just because KMT legislators would not oppose the agreements did not mean they had no reservations, Wang qualified.

Wang Grousing Ma Doesn't Solicit His Views

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¶5. (C) We asked if Speaker Wang has raised these concerns with President Ma, perhaps during their weekly lunches at the Presidential Palace. Wang said no, adding that Ma has not solicited his views on such policy questions. Wang left us with the impression that, absent an invitation from the President, he does not see it as appropriate to air his opinions on such a high-profile policy issue.

Need to Sell GPA to the Public

¶6. (C) While Wang did not expect any problems in the LY approving Taiwan's accession to the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA), he did note the need for the administration to do a better job selling GPA to the public. (Note: GPA accession will come before the LY again on May 1. End note.)

KMT Chairmanship Not a Panacea for Ma

¶7. (C) President Ma Ying-jeou is likely to take the KMT chairmanship, predicted Wang. This would allow him to exert better control over party discipline, but would not be a panacea for resolving conflicts between the administration and the party. Ma would still need to be convincing if he wanted to push his agenda items through the LY, Wang warned. While KMT members would respect Ma, it did not mean they would always agree with him.

Local Politics

¶8. (C) The proposed merger of Kaohsiung County and City is still under debate, said Wang. While Kaohsiung County is more than willing to merge with Kaohsiung City, the reverse cannot not be said. This will be a problem for next year, Wang concluded. On the other hand, Taipei County's situation is less complicated, Wang continued. Taipei County may become a special municipality, eliminating the December election for Taipei County magistrate. This would extend Magistrate Chou Hsi-wei's term until new elections in 2010, complicating the DPP's strategy to wrest control of the district from the KMT. This was more likely in the near-term

than a merger of Taipei city and county (and, possibly, Keelung as well), according to Wang.

¶9. (C) Current Minister of the Interior Liao Liao-yi could become the KMT's candidate for the new special municipality of Taichung in 2010, Wang offered. (Comment: A former Taichung County magistrate, Liao was instrumental in promoting the expected merger of Taichung City and County. Many observers are expecting popular Taichung City Mayor Jason Hu to run for mayor of the new municipality in 2010.)

¶10. (C) Taoyuan legislator Wu Chih-yang, a son of KMT Chair Wu Poh-hsiung, may be the party's candidate to succeed Eric Chu as Taoyuan County magistrate. Should Ma decide to run for KMT chair this summer, nominating Wu Poh-hsiung's son to run in Taoyuan would placate the elder Wu by satisfying his ambitions for his son.

Comment

¶11. (C) While Wang's common refrain on all topics was that as Speaker he must remain studiously neutral, his penchant for sniping at Ma Ying-jeou continued unabated. While this could also reflect Wang's true sentiments as a Taiwanese KMT veteran, the Speaker's well-known rivalry with Ma is enough on its own to explain the constant digs against the President. Although reluctant to openly challenge Ma, he does appear to be walking a fine middle line, giving faint praise to Ma's accomplishments, but being quick to criticize details.

YOUNG